

# Books

**A History of Greenwich** by Beryl Platts. *David and Charles*. £3.50.

IN SOME two hundred and thirty pages the author attempts a continuity based mainly on documents and surviving prints. For the archivist it has much to offer but for the student of archaeology it raises questions which it would take an even longer volume from a team of archaeologists to answer. The general reader attracted by the inclusive title may be a little disappointed to find a Greenwich without either its Royal Observatory building or its Royal Naval College and wanting the "Cutty Sark" and the "Gipsy Moth," evidently adrift from their moorings!

It has been well said that "Greenwich is one of the most dramatic and exciting places in the British Isles" but it is perhaps a little unfair to approach any new book on the subject with that opinion in the forefront of one's mind. Mrs. Platts begins dramatically with the discovery of Roman *tesserae* and cement in a mound in Greenwich Park and vividly recalls the excitement of Francis Haverfield on being told of this at the British Museum: "At last," he exulted, "we have found Noviomagus," the Roman "Newtown" which the author sets out to show preceded Greenwich, but as she stresses, "one building does not make a city."

The discovery most longed for by the Greenwich Antiquarian Society was the precise route through Greenwich of the Roman road from Canterbury to London. Yet the aggregate of rumour, mystery and supposition to which she goes on, is hardly susceptible to firm positive interpretation. Neither is it easy to accept her case for the close identification of Greenwich as the long-sought Noviomagus for all the involvement of the "oppidum" of Charlton. Dealing with the Dark Ages after the Roman departure, Mrs. Platts continues her efforts to revive Geoffrey of Monmouth's writings as reliable history and graphically retails his version of the arrival of Hengist and "Horsus" off the Kentish coast. There are full and appreciative notes on the excavations in the 1780's of eighteen of the Greenwich Park barrows by Rev. James Douglas after a "wide experience of Dark Age burials." The author emphasises that all this work was undertaken at a time when Douglas could have been "looking at a site still undamaged and complete."

It is with the third chapter, "The Conqueror and the Flemings," that for one reader at least the book

comes to life, doubtless because the author is so at home with her documents. Although this major part of her book is not really apt for detailed consideration in the pages of this journal, it is the basis upon which it may be cordially recommended to students of Greenwich History who are primarily concerned with *id quod scriptum est*.

E. LIONEL FEREDAY

**London Before The Fire — a grand panorama** by C. J. Visscher, £1.95, and **Panorama of London 1749** by S. and N. Buck, £1.50, both reissued by *Sidgwick and Jackson* with commentary by John Wellsman.

IT HAS LONG been possible to buy reproductions of Visscher's and the Buck's long panorama views of London at the G.L.C. bookshop. Unless problem. These cased editions by Sidgwick and mounted on a wall these often provoke a storage Jackson provide a neat answer to any such problem and sit alongside other books. The engravings are, however, reduced in size from the originals but even so the Visscher unfolds to over four feet and the Buck to over ten feet long.

The earlier of the two panoramas, that by C. J. Visscher of Amsterdam, represents London around the date 1600. It is mainly of value as a pictorial impression of London before the fire rather than as a strict topographical record. It is in fact extremely unlikely that Visscher ever visited London, so his view must be based on the work of other draughtsmen. In extent it depicts the town on the north bank of the Thames from Charing Cross to the Tower, as seen from a high view-point over Southwark. Bank Side and bridge-head Southwark are also included. Reproduced on the back of the long view are Hollar's engraved views of London immediately before and after the fire of 1666. John Wellman's commentary is further illustrated with two fine details from a de Witt colour panorama showing the Blackfriars area and the Bank Side section of Hollar's magnificent 1647 long view. Contrary to the publisher's comment on the cover these are not properly titled or referred to in the descriptive text and leave a rather unfinished air to the production.

The 18th century panorama published by the brothers Samuel and Nathaniel Buck in 1749 is less instantly attractive but at once more accurate in its architectural detail. This, the longest of these views,

extends from Millbank to the Tower as seen from high over the South Bank. It forms, essentially, a strip elevation of the town on the north bank from Westminster Bridge to London Bridge, with Wren's St. Paul's and churches projecting over the roof tops. Southwark is not shown. While the industrial nature of the City's riverside is well indicated, an air of unreal inactivity hangs over the wharves and quays. Both views are excellent value for the London enthusiast.

JOHN ASHDOWN

**Archaeological Theory and Practice**, D. Strong (Ed.)  
*Seminar Press*. £5.50.

THE VOLUME consists of twenty-two essays presented to Professor W. F. Grimes on his retirement in 1973 as Director of the Institute of Archaeology in London. All the contributors are staff members of the Institute with the exception of John Alexander, and no attempt has been made to restrict the subject matter of the book to any particular theme. This is in no way a criticism, for the special delight of such productions is that they present a fascinating cross-section of current thought and research.

Only two of the essays are directly concerned with the archaeology of the London region, namely the description of the Late Middle Acheulian Industries of Swanscombe by J. d'A. Waechter, and M. W. C. Hassall's account of Roman soldiers in Roman London. However, the discussion of sherds weights and sherd counts (J. D. Evans) will be of special interest to the many excavators in London who are attempting to analyse very large quantities of ceramic evidence. Another contribution concerned with methodology presents a computer technique called Constellation Analysis, used to assess a satisfactory level for classifying items of study (M. H. Newcomer and F. R. Hodson).

There are in addition a number of essays on specialised techniques such as photogrammetry and the photography of flints, but no discussion in this volume of excavation techniques, which is worrying though perhaps symptomatic of the state of the art. Accordingly, the report (by D. Price-Williams) on the environmental archaeology survey of Tell Farā in Israel stands in splendid isolation, for the project was aimed at providing a detailed assessment of the ecology and positioning of archaeological sites in the area as a background to excavation. The techniques employed cannot be directly applied to the investigation of British urban sites, but the essay is of interest to all fieldworkers irrespective of situation.

The remaining contributions are more distinctly academic and range widely across the archaeological scene. If any one essay must be singled out for spec-

ial mention, then certainly it must be 'Roman Museums' by the late Professor Strong. From a thorough search of the classical sources there emerges a picture of the ways in which Rome housed and administered her collections. Regrettably no museum catalogue of Roman date has survived, but the author has humourously quoted from a Greek temple inventory. The list includes a bronze jug with no bottom, footbowls, two of which were not sound, and a cow lacking its left horn. Apparently little has changed.

R. A. CANHAM

**Excavations in West Kent, 1960-1970** by Brian Philp, published by the *Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit, C.I.B.* Headquarters, Dover Castle, Kent. 242 pp. 42 plates, 61 figures, £5.

MR. PHILP'S latest book provides a tangible answer to the charge so often levelled at rescue archaeologists — that they cannot or will not publish the results of their work. The book is a handsome volume bound in hard covers and profusely illustrated. It includes excavation reports of thirty archaeological sites, of which seven are prehistoric, fourteen of Romano-British date, eight Saxon or medieval and finally, one rather out-of-place description of a 17th century house at Bromley.

The finest report is probably Site 24, the "Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Polhill," where some 107 graves were recorded, many of them with grave goods of great interest. Another report of value to Kentish archaeology is Site 5, a "Bronze Age Site on Hayes Common" and in a monumental paper of about thirty-five pages, Mr. Philp details the results of his excavation of Site 21, the "Roman Villa at Darenth." This dig continued the work of George Payne, the 19th century archaeologist who excavated part of the site in 1894. The medieval period is not very well represented, there being four sites only published in the book; however, each report (and all four are very short) has some interesting facet which has made the publication of it worthwhile.

The index at the back of the book is adequate and concise but the preceding thirteen pages of bibliography and references, which in themselves are a mine of information for the seasoned archaeologist, are well worth a close study and would make an excellent offprint suitable for the student archaeologist. The book is well illustrated with excellent photographs, clear drawings and neat and tidy plans; it is an obvious must for the Kentish archaeologist's bookshelf and in these days of rising printing costs value for money at £5.

NESTA CAIGER

## Recent Journals

**Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, Volume 24 (1973).** Editors: Lawrence Snell and Hugh Chapman. (Issued to members).

A BUMPER ISSUE of London's transactions running to 220 pages and containing ten main articles and several shorter notes. The most substantial archaeological paper describes two excavations carried out in the City at Aldgate and Bush Lane during 1972! This publishes groups of Neronian and Flavian ceramics and the excavators, Hugh Chapman and Tony Johnson discuss the first archaeological evidence for early Roman military occupation in London. Further archaeological reports include an excellent piece of field recording by Jeremy Haslam of a builder's standing section across Aldersgate Street with superimposed road surfaces ranging from Roman to late medieval times; further work on the Brockley Hill settlement in 1968 by Stephen Castle and John Warbis; and the Roman burials found at Old Ford in 1972. J. Barrett discusses the Deverel Rimbury cremation cemeteries known in Middlesex, together with the ceramics, Brian Robertson reappraises Roman material found at Hendon in 1889 and a Roman site at Clapham is promoted to being a post-medieval one.

The documentary studies allow John Harvey to reconstruct the situation of late 18th century nursery gardens in London, and Douglas Moss and Ian Murray to describe 14th century Tottenham. H. K. Cameron continues his series on the Middlesex church brasses with those of Harrow. A good issue with the welcome return of the volume title to the spine of the journal.

JOHN ASHDOWN

## Miscellany

**The Blue Plaques of Barnet.** Edited by Philippa Bernard for Hendon and District Archaeological Society (88 Temple Fortune Lane, NW11 7TX), 34p includes postage.

THIS HANDLIST is a guide to the 21 historical association markers in the London Borough of Barnet. The Barnet plaques commemorate famous persons (10) or mark buildings or sites of historic interest (11), and it is noteworthy that the great majority were erected by the former Borough of Hendon between 1957 and 1965. Undoubtedly it was correct for a local authority to pursue a different policy to the better known LCC/GLC blue plaques, which in general only record the

residence of persons in extant buildings. The booklet, which is illustrated and has a sketch map, provides a short historical note on each plaque.

**Joseph Powell and his drawings of Clapham.** By E. E. F. Smith and J. L. Howgego for Clapham Antiquarian Society. (49 Mayford Road, S.W.12) 90p including postage.

THIS WELL produced booklet forms a companion to the Society's **Clapham: an historical tour** (70p), and aims to bring the Clapham drawings of Joseph Powell to a wider public knowledge. Powell's life, professional background and Clapham years (1815-1824) are described by Eric Smith and J. Howgego, who also provide a descriptive catalogue of the group of 20 Clapham drawings recently located. 12 drawings and 3 lithographs are illustrated and a brief history of the Clapham Antiquarian Society introduces the booklet. It should be added that the drawings are not only attractive but are valuable historic documents.

JOHN ASHDOWN

## Also received

**The Etruscan Cities and their Culture** by Luisa Banti (Batsford) 322pp., 96 plates, 13 maps, £5.50. This work deals in considerable detail with the development of the Etruscan culture. It has a profusion of well annotated plates, a comprehensive index and a useful glossary. The select bibliography is noteworthy for its useful grouping of titles under specific headings.

**The Development of North American Archaeology** edited by James Fitting (Pennsylvania State University Press), 309 pp., £5.25. This series of ten essays describes the history of archaeology in North America from the Arctic to California. Each of the regions so detailed has its own author but a common style.

**The Bone Hunters** by Url Lanham (Columbia University Press), 285 pp., £6.90. A profusely but somewhat irrelevantly illustrated book deals with the personalities of the 19th century paleontologists working in the Great West of the U.S.A. One reads with amazement the intrigues which bedevilled the field trips undertaken by the early (?) scientific Americans, including such acts as destroying finds to prevent other field workers using them.

**Total War** by Peter Calvoceossi and Guy Wint (Penguin Books), 965 pp., 98 plates, £1.50. Hardly archaeology although it seems excellent monetary value. Another value is that it reminds us that yesterday's history is today's archaeology and perhaps local societies ought to consider having conservation orders placed on any surviving air raid shelters, pillboxes, etc.

GALE CANVIN